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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DS-00
	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	DCP-00
	NSAE-00	GIWI-00	FMPC-00	SSO-00	SS-00	EPAE-00	DSCC-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 001281

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S MUNCY

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SUBJECT: STUDY SEES BDP'S FUTURE IN VICE PRESIDENT KHAMA

REF: GABORONE 1039

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Lois Aroian for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: A recent needs assessment conducted for the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) is likely to reinforce Vice President Khama's perceived importance to the future of the Party. The study, passed to us by a senior GOB official, found that the BDP's popularity had declined due to a general frustration with the Government's perceived failure to deliver on development expectations, particularly regarding job creation. In addition to rising unemployment, other factors threatening to undermine BDP support include the passing of the independence generation, expanding access to education, and rural-urban migration. At the same time, popularity of the opposition parties has grown. The one ray of hope the document holds out for the BDP is the widespread (60 percent) approval for Ian Khama's performance as a leader. This combination of findings is likely to mute nascent dissatisfaction with the emergence of "autocratic tendencies" within the party, strengthening Khama's hand as heir apparent of the Presidency both of the BDP and of Botswana. END SUMMARY.

BDP BRINGS BACK SOUTH AFRICAN CONSULTANT

12. (C) Six months after the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) won an overwhelming majority of parliamentary seats in Botswana's ninth general election on October 30, 2004, it hired South African consultant Lawrence Schlemmer to conduct a needs analysis for the Party. Schlemmer's team administered a national survey and conducted in-depth interviews with a small group of opinion leaders within the BDP. Their findings describe the relative popularity of the various political parties, the perceptions and priorities of the voters, and problems faced by the BDP.

13. (C) The BDP first contracted Schlemmer after the 1994 election, in which the Botswana National Front expanded its presence in the National Assembly from three to thirteen seats, at that point its best showing ever. (Note: Although Schlemmer wrote that report for the BDP, Public Relations Manager at Debswana Mr. Kabelo Binns confirmed to EconOff that then Chairman of Debswana Louis Nchindo paid for the study personally. As reported earlier, one of the individuals interviewed as an opinion leader earlier this year was told by his interlocutors that the 2005 study was paid for by a mining firm with significant interests in Botswana -- i.e. De Beers. End Note.) Schlemmer recommended that President Masire retire early and that the BDP bring Ian Khama into politics to unify the Party. The BDP scrupulously adhered to his recommendations.

REPORT REVEALS DISTURBING TRENDS FOR BDP

14. (C) Although Schlemmer's recent report confirms that the BDP remains Botswana's strongest single party by far, it highlights several statistics that worry the ruling party. While 46.8 percent of those polled said they would vote for the BDP if elections were held soon, the combined support for the Botswana National Front (31.0), Botswana Congress Party (15.0), and the Botswana Alliance Movement (1.4) slightly exceeded that amount. The fact that nearly 60 percent of those polled expected the BDP to win their constituencies suggested that complacency among BDP supporters could significantly threaten its performance in the next election. Over 78 percent of BDP supporters listed one of the opposition parties as a second choice,

indicating that there is scope for opposition parties to attract BDP voters.

15. (C) An analysis of support for various parties by population subgroup confirmed the conventional wisdom that the BDP is strongest among those with little education and low incomes, those who live in rural areas and those over the age of fifty. This is a largely ominous pattern for the BDP. As the independence generation passes, access to education expands and rural-urban migration continues, the population subgroups in which it is strongest will shrink and, with them, the BDP's margin of victory.

16. (C) Aside from their top priority of job creation, respondents cited vague reasons for their negative perceptions of the BDP. Thirty percent of those polled described job creation as a major shortcoming of the Government. When asked why they believed support for opposition parties had grown, respondents consistently pointed to a desire for a change in Government, a perception that the Government failed to keep its promises, and its failure to meet popular needs. In a

similar question, the reasons most frequently stated for rating the Government poorly were insufficient job creation, failure to improve people's lives, indifference to popular needs and failure to keep promises. This discontent was not unique to opposition supporters -- thirty-nine percent of BDP voters described Government performance as either indifferent or bad. This general dissatisfaction with the BDP will complicate the Party's efforts to mount a targeted response.

#### FINDINGS FOCUS ATTENTION ON IAN KHAMA AS SAVIOR OF BDP

17. (C) The one bright spot this study uncovered for the BDP was the widespread approval of Vice President Khama. Sixty-seven percent of all respondents described him as a good leader, including 56 percent of BNF supporters and 61 percent of the BCP faithful. Given the difficulty of job creation and otherwise responding to the causes of the BDP's declining popularity, the Party is likely to focus on exploiting Khama's popularity to extend its rule. Although interviews of opinion leaders within the BDP revealed complaints about the emergence of "autocratic tendencies" within the Party -- undoubtedly a reference to Khama's perceived authoritarian bent -- the growing vulnerability of the Party without Khama is likely to mute these concerns.

#### COMMENT

18. (C) The recommendations of the report encourage the BDP to revamp its image among its supporters and the general public by being more responsive to their concerns. Given the effort and sacrifices that this would require, the BDP is likely to take the short cut of hitching the party to Ian Khama's rising star and campaign primarily on his name and reputation. This will create the ideal conditions to perpetuate his reputed "autocratic tendencies." If dissatisfaction with his way of running the Party is repressed, it could magnify existing divisions and weaken the party further.

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